(Palmer's Letter from Prince Albert)

One of Palmer's letters, probably from the period immediately preceding his first confinement, is preserved in his first file. It is addressed to "Gentlemen & Ladies," with a small figure "2" over "Gentlemen" and a similar figure "1" over "Ladies," as if Palmer had thought it more polite to reverse the order. The hand-writing, which is probably Palmer's, is strong and clear, with minor corrections inserted here and there.

It reads rather like an advertisement. Perhaps the most striking thing about it is its enthusiastic tone, and a related tendency to veer off on a tangent, as if the enthusiasm or energy did not come from the subject matter but from something in Palmer himself, and more or less vented itself on the nearest available object. In discussing "Prince Albert" Palmer enjoys identifying the town as the "future capital" of Alberta, "a great division or province." The town has "great physical advantages" from being only 23 miles from the "Forks" from which it can "derive all the commerce it can manage and a great deal more."

With a fervour that almost seems to be a exaggerated parody of "frontier spirit," Palmer describes the two "gigantic Rivers navicable [sic] in a westerly direction." He enthuses over the "thousand miles" of the South Saskatchewan with its tributaries, the Red and Belly Rivers, and its "continuation" the Boar River. He anticipates the day when steamers like the "Lilly Northcote" and the "Northwest" will navigate the North Branch past Edmonton to Fort Calgary, "at the base of those grand hills the Rockies." Rhapsodizing over the products of the "sub Arctic forest," Palmer digresses to discuss his friend, Alex Loudoun's lost potatoes at Battleford: "his entire crop with the exception of about (12) twelve bushels being `frozen in the ground' he has to thank his own carelessness for that." Even the potato is ennobled by Palmer as "that Irish loved [loved Irish?] vegetable."

The second of Palmer's letter's dates from his second confinement. Palmer begins by asking one "Annie" if she has been lonely without him. Claiming to miss her very much, he expresses his hope of being able to see her in a month, after which they will presumably be married as "we shall meet to part no more in this life." He is so certain that he asks her to "get your truso ready darling."